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URN: urn:nbn:de:gbv:ilm1-2016200061

Original published in:

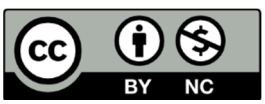
Kultura = Culture : international journal for cultural researches. - Skopje : MI-AN Publishing. - 11 (2015), p. 91-102.

ISSN: 1857-7725

DOI:

URL: http://journals.cultcenter.net/index.php/culture/article/view/167

[Visited: 2016-06-14]



UDC 323.28:2-6]:316.774

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF A RELIGIOUS TERRORIST GROUP IDENTITY

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Abstract: **Terrorist groups use their own websites in order to recruit novices, distribute propaganda and build a specific identity. In our paper we describe this form of strategic communication from a theoretical perspective and then expose the methodological design and results of a critical discourse analysis by which we examined texts from the websites of Hezbollah, Gama'a al-Islamiyya and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Findings show that the groups use different strategies of identity building. However, the strategies of construction and justification play a major role in each group.**

Keywords: **Terrorism, Identity, Religion, Critical Discourse Analysis, Strategic Communication**

I. INTRODUCTION

Theories and dimensions of identity as well as concepts of identity building are important in delivering insights into how terrorist organizations establish their identities through online texts and what mechanisms they use to mobilize and connect to their target audiences. To find out how terrorist organizations build their identities online, an analysis of the discourse used in the website texts of three religiously motivated terrorist groups was conducted. Analysis of online texts highlights important elements such as persuasive/strategic communication and written language strategies. Moreover, an increasing number of people receive their information from the Internet; hence analyzing this communication channel has proven to be extremely relevant and informative of terrorists' innovative media usage.

In this article we will, first, describe why people engage in religious terrorism, second, present concepts of identity, and third, explain the critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach in the context of strategic communication. After having laid out our theoretical framework we will then, fourth, describe the research design of our empirical study, fifth, present important results in a comparative way, and sixth, end with a conclusion, critical discussion and outlook on future research possibilities.

II. TYPES OF TERRORISM

In their book "Violence as Communication" Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf (1982) discuss two distinct

types of terrorism: repressive/vigilante/state terrorism and insurgent terrorism. They divide insurgent terrorism into three subcategories: social-revolutionary terrorism which "aims at taking power and at revolutionizing the whole society" (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982: 59), separatist terrorism that "calls for secession of an ethnical or national group from a state" (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982: 59), and single-issue terrorism, i. e. "ad hoc terrorism by one or a few individuals advocating coercively that the state grant some privilege to a group with which the terrorist sympathizes" (Schmid & de Graaf, 1982: 60). In our study, we will take into consideration only insurgent terrorism.

Terrorism is driven by various causes and can pursue diverse objectives. Hence, we find different types of terrorism that create and are aimed at different identities. Terrorist groups can be distinguished by the reasons that lead to the arousal and strengthening of their motives. Typologies of terrorism enable a greater conceptual clarity, help order complex data and can be practically applied to political as well as social realms (Marsden and Schmid, 2013). A categorization must be based on terrorism characteristics that are perceived as important and salient in providing crucial information that allow us to decipher identity building strategies. As terrorism is of relevance to different realms such as political sciences, sociology, or communication sciences, different typologies have emerged that are adjusted to various needs (e.g. Marsden and Schmid, 2013; Hirschmann, 2003; Piazza, 2009).

For the present study we will use a typology suggested by Waldmann (2001). In Waldmann's typology the term "terrorism" focuses on terrorists' motives and self-concepts, and differentiates nationalistic, social-revolutionary as well as religiously motivated terrorism. Thus, it seems appropriate for our purpose. In this paper, we will concentrate on groups that belong to the religious motivation type.

Terrorism is often also related to extremism. Nevertheless, extremism cannot be seen as an original trigger of terrorism, but as "an intermediate cause" (Transnational Terrorism, Security and the Rule of Law, 2008a: 16): Extremist ideologies and identities – regardless of whether political or religious in nature – are a consequence rather than a cause and result from political, religious, or societal dissatisfaction (Transnational Terrorism, Security and the Rule of Law, 2008a). Terrorism, thus, can rather be seen as the highest level of extremism escalation (Hirschmann, 2003) and it can be traced back to religious, ethnic-nationalist and socialist motivations, as shown in the typology.

However, it is sometimes hard to identify the causes and motivational forces of terrorists because the original factors, that had once been the trigger to engage in terrorism, may be substituted by other reasons. This is especially the case the longer the terrorist organization exists and the longer a certain terrorist campaign lasts (Schmid, 2013b). Terrorist acts provoke counter-measurements that, in turn, may provoke other terrorist acts – during this cycle the original reasons may get lost and the terrorist group focuses on other motives such as "(1) cycles of revenge; (2) the need of the group to provide for its members and the survival of the group itself; and (3) the rationale of not giving up profitable criminal activities originally initiated to sustain the group" (Schmid, 2013b: 15-16). Even the identity of a group can change from, e. g., religious to nationalist or be a mixture of both.

Another reason why people engage in terrorism is found in rapid modernization and high economic growth (Transnational Terrorism, Security, and the Rule of Law, 2008a: 16): "When traditional norms and social patterns crumble or are made to seem irrelevant, new radical ideologies that are sometimes based on religion or perhaps nostalgia for a glorious past, may become attractive to certain segments of society". Globalization especially is an important factor within this context: According to Bird, Blomberg, and Hess (2008), people who engage in terrorism have the impression that only already wealthy economies benefit from globalization – poorer countries, on the contrary, are perceived as not having benefited from globalization. Terrorist acts are then designed to show the people's dissatisfaction.

In summary, it can be said that terrorism is triggered by complex social and political circumstances that people are unsatisfied with. Especially when under the impression that their concerns and opinions are not being respected, people may engage in terrorism because they perceive this as the only way to express their dissatisfaction and force a government to change the status quo. But as Schmid (2013b) outlined, terrorism is a cycle that is hard to break as terrorists may substitute their original objectives with new motives that will justify their actions. All these objectives are communicated on groups' websites where terrorists strive to create a specific identity by using strategic communication.

III. CONCEPTS OF IDENTITY

Manuel Castells begins his work with this statement: "Our world, and our lives, are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization and identity." (Castells, 1997: 1) According to Castells, networks play a decisive role in the modern-day world. He considers a "widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity" (Castells, 1997: 2). Furthermore, the historical development of a specific culture is crucial for the evolvement of identity. Below we will describe Castells' notion of identity in detail and then complement it with some other views on identity. The importance of resorting to a theoretical framework before delving into the empirical study can be simply explained with Castells' words: "social theory is a tool to understand the world" (Castells, 1997: 3)

Identity is closely linked to an individual's own perception of self and the social world. "Identity is people's source of meaning and experience." (Castells, 1997: 6) Castells divides identity into: gender, religious, national, ethnic, territorial, socio-biological (cf. Castells, 1997: 2). Our interest lies in the religious dimension. Castells further differentiates social roles of identity such as being a daughter, sportsperson, smoker, neighbor, etc. These roles are defined by norms that are also structured by societal institutions and organization (cf. Castells, 1997: 7). Complete identities, on the contrary, arise only when they are fully internalized by the individual; "identities are stronger sources of meaning than roles, because of the process of self-construction and individuation that they involve. In simple terms, identities organize the meaning while roles organize the functions." (Castells, 1997: 7) "Meaning" is defined as "the symbolic identification by a social actor of the purpose of his/her action." (Castells, 1997: 7)

In general, individuals extract their main meaning out of a primordial identity. "By identity, as it refers to social actors, I understand the process of construction

of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning. For a given individual, or for a collective actor, there may be a plurality of identities." (Castells, 1997: 6) The more identities an individual combines, the stronger the feeling of disruption, dissatisfaction and desire to concentrate on fewer, perhaps just one identity, can be. Religion is often found to be a very dominant identity if the believer subjugates all other desires to this central category.

Castells (1997: 7) assumes that any identity is a construction that can constantly be changed, enforced or fragmented, depending on which identity the individual is inclined to or – and that is where the terrorist website texts come into play – how the creators of a specific collective identity manage to establish it as a driving force via strategic communication.

Castells distinguishes three forms of identity: legitimizing identity, resistance identity and project identity. Most activities of insurgent terrorist groups fall under the category of "resistance identity". Thus, terrorists number among "those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society" (Castells, 1997: 8). Castells identifies this type of identity as the most important in our current society (cf. Castells, 1997: 9). Religion, in his view, is "a most important source of constructing identity in the network society" (Castells, 1997: 12). Religion is a frequent part of collective identity building as it occurs on all three societal levels: individual (micro), organizational (meso) and societal (macro).

Combining personal and social identity theories (micro-macro link) in his discussion of identity building, Erikson (1974) states that there are two components of an identity: a personal segment based on an individual's history and the solving of adolescent identity crises; and a social segment based on acceptance of self-perception within society. There are several dimensions and characteristics to identity, such as religious or cultural ones. Damon (1983) identified that religion provides a distinct social group for an individual to belong to and agree with, both ideologically and socially. Also, King (2003: 197) argues that "religion provides a distinct setting for identity exploration and commitment through offering ideological, social, and spiritual contexts."

"What the specific notion of identity adds to a basic sociological or cultural framework is the sense of Agency, that we construct our own identities out of the options afforded to us by our general positionality and our particular trajectory of experiences, encounters, options for action, and so forth." (Lemke, 2008: 21) One of these options is the "encounter" with internet texts, pieces of temporarily fixed discourse, that might (re-)shape one's identity. The goal of these texts is that the readers start identifying with this social group; the language used is supposed to create an attachment, a sense of belonging.

Language is one of the most important means for generating meaning; in order to detect the construction of identity through, by and in language, critical discourse analysis (CDA) seems to be most suitable.

IV. DISCOURSE AS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

"[A]ll social phenomena and objects obtain their meaning(s) through discourse, which is defined as a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Laclau, 1988: 254). Thus, discourse is the result of articulation. The underlying assumption is that meanings can be examined; however, "social reality" cannot be detected as it is elusive due to many influencing factors. That is why CDA belongs to the so-called "sensitizing concepts": they indicate a certain direction but no fixed and pre-assigned research approach. "It should finally be stressed that, contrary to what is often assumed outside of the field, *Discourse Analysis is not a method of research, but a (cross) discipline*." (Van Dijk, 2011: 6)

"The defined and delimited set of statements that constitute a discourse are themselves expressive of and organized by a specific ideology. That is, ideology and discourse are aspects of the same phenomenon, regarded from two different standpoints." (Kress, 1985: 30) That is why the bargaining of power, based on ideologies such as religious frameworks, is a crucial element in discourses; "the social construction of identity always takes place in a context marked by power relationships" (Castells, 1997: 7). Frequently, this construction manifests itself in a defensive communicative reaction (resistance identity). It is an assumption of CDA that language is never neutral but evolves in socio-cultural interaction between individuals and groups (cf. Hodges & Nilep[1], 2007: 4). Thus, discourses are always only partly fixed and can be challenged by discourse-external elements that hinder a broadly accepted meaning.

"If discourses are the organizations of ideological materials in discursive forms, and if these discourses exist in an already established repertoire of discourses in a social group, then the individual speaker will not in fact be creating the discourse but rather will simply reproduce the discourse that she or he has previously learned." (Kress, 1985: 31) This makes us think that a recipient of discourse presented on a terrorist group website could – in a follow-up communication – reproduce this discourse, its content and the ideology presented there. It could thereby influence and/or strengthen his and others' religious identity construction. In addition: "The discursive fields which structure our understandings of war and terrorism also serve to legitimize and delegitimize violent struggles." (Heath-Kelly, Jarvis & Baker-Beall, 2014: 2)

On this foundation of theories of identity and CDA, we conducted an empirical study in order to answer the following research question: What strategies of identity building do the three religious terrorist groups use to portray themselves as well as others (e. g. competing groups, government) on their websites and how do they express their identity, history, and goals?

V. RESEARCH DESIGN

The starting point for the research at hand was the CDA codebook developed by Wodak et al. (2009: 36-42), originally composed from and for an analysis of the discursive construction of Austrian national identity. In order to draw conclusions about discursive identity building, Wodak et al. (2009) classified the means and forms of language of Austrian politicians

and categorized them into argumentative schemes and greater discursive strategies.

On the basis of the developed coding scheme, we evaluated the phrases and identified their discursive meaning. From that point we inferred the identity of the writer / group in order to discover and describe the relationship between textual and social processes. The originally used categories were, however, modified since we focused on the discourse of terrorist groups on their web pages. Adaptations of categories were made conformable to the theoretical foundations of terrorism and strategic communication. Thus, five greater strategy categories, with up to five sub-strategies, were used for our analysis:

1) **Strategies of justification and relativization** are used in order to capture the organization's attempt to correct and reason facts and circumstances complying with the organization's own ideology. Put in a simplified manner, the organization thereby offers the answer to the question of *who we are and what we do*, *in relation to others* (usually perceived and presented as enemies).
2) **Constructive strategies** capture an organization's attempt to constitute a community spirit and recruit new members by legitimizing its own deeds by emphasizing sameness, assimilation, inclusion, belonging and unification. The explanations of *who we are and what we do* (non-related to others) play the most important roles here.
3) **Perpetuation strategies** are used in order to emphasize the intolerability of the *status quo* and occasionally to mention the necessity of continuation of the organization's existence, its ideology and actions.
4) **Strategies of transformation**, on the other hand, underline the desire for change that is already proposed. These strategies are used in order to once again answer the question of the organization's goals and aims, thus *what we want but related to future or (glorious) past times*.
5) **Strategies of demontage and destruction**, finally, are used in order to answer the question of *who they (enemies) are*, usually by discrediting opponents by means of derogatory terms, pejorative attribution and defamation. The emphasis of otherness plays an important role within these strategies.

The point of departure for the *sampling* of the present research were religious terrorist groups that are rather big, well-known and have an English website. Another criterion was that we wanted groups from three different countries. The three websites analyzed in the paper at hand belong to: 1) Hezbollah, 2) the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and 3) Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya. Overall the analysis covered 13 online articles including "About us", mission statements and press releases. The coding was completed by an international coder team[2] using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) MAXQDA[3]. We ensured intercoder reliability by constant exchange of information and double-codings.

At this point, we will give a short overview of the respective groups.

1) **Hezbollah** emerged as a homogenous organization in the mid 1980s. The organization justifies its existence as being an answer to the

Israeli invasion of Lebanon. In Hezbollah's founding documents the Iranian revolution is the source of inspiration and an example of "what can be done when the faithful gather under the banner of Islam". Furthermore "[o]nly Islam can bring about men's renaissance, progress and creativity". Hezbollah positioned itself "neither East nor West" and describes its enemies as "the countries of the arrogant world" lead by the USA and its "spearhead" Israel. Both are described as imperialistic forces and major enemies of Islam (Norton, 2009: 36-37). The main goal of Hezbollah is a Lebanon free from "occupiers" and based on Sharia – the (Shia) Islamic law. The organization conducts kidnappings, hijackings, bombings etc. However since 2006, Hezbollah distances itself from the founding documents declaring them as "obsolete" (ibid.: 41-46).

2) The **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)** was the self-proclaimed name of the Islamic State of Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. The Taliban came to power in the mid-1990s with the aim to end the civil war that emerged after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. In the beginning, as a militant group of students led by Mullah Omar, IEA promoted Islam as the best alternative to civil war and ethnic divisions between the Afghan tribes. Influenced by Wahhabi teachers and Pashtun tribal traditions, the organization installed strict and conservative interpretations of Sunni Islam as the state law. Islam was thereby the only religion accepted within the state borders. As such, the state was supported and ratified by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In the aftermath of September 11th 2001 the United States military forces removed the Taliban from power under the accusation of providing shelter for Osama bin Laden, as well as for organizing training camps for international terrorists (Oxford Islamic Studies Online, 2014; Rashid, 2010). From then on the members of the organization operate underground, most likely based in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

3) **Gama'a al-Islamiyya** (GAI) was originally an alliance of loosely networked cells of Egyptian students, who banned everything that did not conform to the (Sunni) Islamic law. The second common denominator of the network members was the opposition to the Egyptian government's peace negotiations and policy towards Israel (cf. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2014; Kepel 2003: 151; The institute for the Study of Violent Groups, 2012). In 1997 the organization made an agreement with the Egyptian government intending to desist from violent actions on both sides. However, not all members supported the agreement and the organization dissolved. The branch led by Mustafa Hamza supported the ceasefire. The other one, led by Rifa'i Taha Musa, continued armed operations, is still active and represents the largest militant group in Egypt. It cooperates with Al-Qaeda continuously (Council of Foreign Relations, 2014; National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2013).

The comparison of the three organizations reveals some similarities. Firstly, their denotations are strongly associated with religion and/or God:

Hezbollah denotes "Party of God"; IEA contains the word "Emirate", which depicts a state under Allah; and Gama'a al-Islamiyya stands for "The Islamic Group". Secondly, their opponents are commonly labeled as "enemies of Islam". Thirdly, their first aim is the installation of *Sharia* – the Islamic law – within state borders. Fourthly, the final Goal for each of them is the so-called *Umma* – a meta-state of all Muslims with Allah as lawmaker. Lastly, they all use similar methods including: kidnapping, hijacking, skyjackings, suicide bombings etc.

However, the analyzed organizations demonstrate some differences as well. First, they all emerged in different countries. Second, the emergence was triggered by different events over different periods of time. Third, they belong to different branches of Islam (IEA and GAI are Sunni, while Hezbollah is Shia) and are consequently supported by different states as sponsors. And finally, even though they all describe their opponents as „the enemies of Islam", the concrete enemies are partly different. In case of Hezbollah it is the USA and Israel. For IEA it is the western world and democracy (symbolized by the USA). And in case of GAI the major enemies are the secular governments of Egypt and Israel.

VI. Results

Correspondingly, as shown in Figure 1, the use of discourse on the websites of analyzed terrorist organizations shows both similarities and differences. It is, however, generally inclusive of various dimensions of identity frequently used by these organizations in their recruitment and propaganda activities.

The usage of constructive strategies together with those of justification and relativization is dominant. The opposite applies to the usage of strategies of perpetuation. Based on the strategies described above, this means that the explanation of the very existence (with or without mentioning the opponents) plays the principal role in the discursive strategic communication of all three organizations. Continuation of the *status quo* is, by contrast, communicated as unwanted.

Combined with the usage of strategies of justification and relativization, construction strategies claim between 56% and 59% of the total web-page based content of each organization. By contrast, all of them address the *status quo* (perpetuation strategies) only within 3% to 9%. The way Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 108) address such discourse usage, exemplified by a material object, gives the best depiction of the strategies behind it: "[w]hat is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence."

Differences, on the other hand, are most visible in respect to the usage of strategies of transformation (13-29%) and strategies of demontage (6-23%). Which is, we assume, very much dependent on and shaped by different contexts. For example, Gama'a al-Islamiyya's major enemy is the secular Government of Egypt and, respectively, its policy towards Israel. Hence, they share the same political and physical space (the state of Egypt) and its (target) population with their major opponent. Furthermore, they also share the same ethnic and partly the same religious identity. In such an environment, from the strategic communication perspective, it is less appropriate to

use destructive discourse strategies, since it is not easy to define opponents as "they".

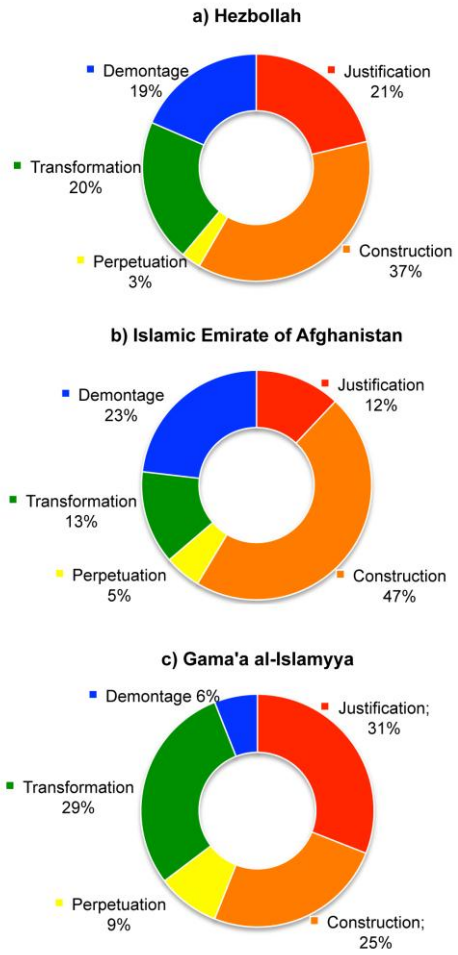

Fig. 1 Usage of discourse strategies by each organization

Hezbollah and IEA enemies, though partly different, are other countries. Thus, they do not share common religious and/or ethnic identities. Such opponents, commonly perceived as foreign invaders, allow more frequent use of demontage strategies since they are easy to locate and describe as *they*, as *others*. Laclau and Mouffe (1985), in their seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, address such rhetoric as "chains of equivalence", that occur when particular and different objects are brought to the same level through discourse (Laclau & Mouffe 1985) e.g. all those not having the same belief, or some other relevant dimension of identity, are considered enemies.

More frequent use of transformation strategies by GAI can also be explained in a similar fashion, hence with respect to shared ethnic identity and the same political/physical space with opponents and target audiences simultaneously. In such an environment other means and options for strategic communication about their own cause, beyond terrorism in the most literal sense, are available. The opposite applies for Hezbollah and IEA.

In addition, we also examined the approximate text structure and, respectively, the line of argumentation of each analyzed article. The dominance of both strategies of justification and relativization and the constructive strategies continues in this regard as well. The opening and the main parts of almost every article were most often coded with constructive strategies codes. Hence the explanation of *who we are and what we do* occurs not only most, but first as well. This strategy is – within the mentioned sections – largely supported by emphasizing the difference from the others. Thus answering the same question – by using the strategies of justification and relativization – but

related to opponents. The least used strategies of perpetuation appear most frequently in the main part of an article. These strategies play a supportive role and are commonly applied in order to accentuate the unsustainability of the *status quo*.

At the same time, the sparse use of the strategies of perpetuation serves as a transition to the closing part of an online article. The closing part is commonly deployed by the strategies of destruction. In this way both "negative" strategies support each other by locating opponents as actors whose actions are the source responsible for the current adverse situation. The greatest part of the closing sequence of an article is, by means of strategies of transformation, commonly dedicated to celebration of already conceptualized change.

During the research process we also detected some major differences in the stylistic conception of the writings. IEA and GAI use very flowery and picturesque language, and put a very strong emphasis on religious and ethnic themes. Hezbollah on the other hand uses more factual, reduced and accurate language and accents religious and ethnic narratives less.

VII. Conclusion and Outlook

Summarizing the findings of the discourse analysis of the writings on the websites of the three terrorist groups, evidence suggests that there are similarities in usage of various discourse strategies. The communication about *who we are and what we do* – thus the deployment of constructive strategies as well as those of justification and relativization – plays the principal role in discursive construction of terrorist identity. In contrast, communications about *who they are and what they do* together with *we want the change* of *status quo* play almost exclusively supporting roles. The latter includes the deployment of strategies of demontage, transformation and perpetuation. Although attributed with different role importance, our analysis shows that constructive strategies together with strategies of justification and relativization (major role), and strategies of perpetuation (supportive role) were deployed to a similar degree by all three organizations. Otherwise, the analysis indicates considerable differences between deployment of strategies of demontage (supportive role) and strategies of transformation (supportive role). However, the greatest emphasis overall lies on religious, resistance and project identity narratives, albeit conducted with different stylistic means of narrative.

We assume that the importance of the different contexts of emergence and existence for each organization is hidden behind the differences. Such context-based differences could be the country of origin, perceived major enemy, branch of Islam, point of origin and historical background, communicated main cause etc. Furthermore, as we only analyzed three Islamic religious terrorist groups, we recommend carrying on with a wider sample by including groups with different backgrounds and from other regions. An expansion of the amount of coding materials would also be recommendable. However, we are aware of the fact that, today, social media above all, but also traditional websites allow peers to consume and interact "without having to disclose much about one's offline identity or qualifications." (Walther et al., 2011: 26)

In order to come to the aforementioned conclusions we applied CDA to terrorist groups' websites, as these deliver easily accessible and constant information. Furthermore, this enabled us to conduct an in-depth analysis of the chosen words in the texts (or discourse) on these sites. Other ways to explore the identity construction of terrorist group members would have been possible with interpersonal contact, either by conducting guided interviews or observing meetings. However, since establishing contact or face-to-face interaction with terrorists seems unfeasible, using websites as discourse was the most practicable approach.

ENDNOTES

[1] Hodges and Nilep (2007) present several CDA case studies that deal with discourses in the context of war (mostly in Iraq) and (mostly religiously motivated) terrorism. The anthology of Schneider and Gräf (2011) is devoted to Islamic counter-publics on the Internet (however not terrorist).

[2] Peter Franssen, Julia Kötschau, Kathrin Müller, Elisabeth Petersilie, Hua Su and Mubashra Shah belonged to the international research team. The authors want to express their gratitude to them for their input.

[3] MAXQDA is a CAQDAS that assists in creating systematic evaluations and interpretations of textual data. This software was utilized because of its various beneficial features over other competing software. Initially, MAXQDA provides a teamwork function that allows the creation of a protocol of all work of separate team members. Secondly, the software is equipped with an advanced memo system that allows the organization of notes and insights on text. Thirdly, MAXQDA enables its users to have up to four main windows and to link different text passages, which makes a complex analysis easier to manage. Additionally, the software has an array of tools that allow advanced data visualization. It also provides users the ability to define variables and export their work to Excel or SPSS. Hence, for the purposes of our Critical Discourse Analysis, MAXQDA 11 provided ample tools and an adequate platform in contrast to other CAQDAS that were also tested, such as Atlas.ti, Nvivo, Qualrus and Crawdad.

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